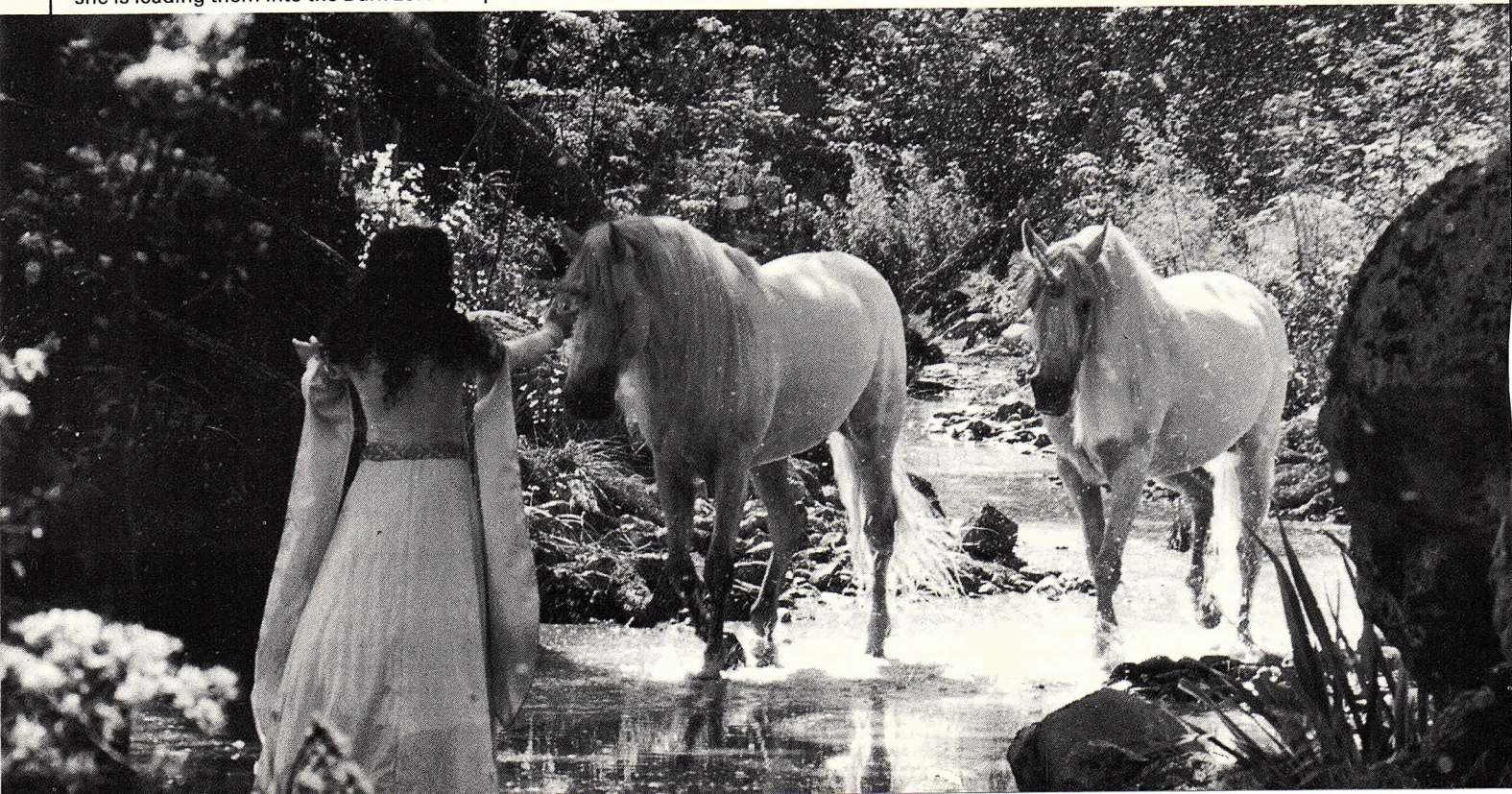




Princess Lili (Mia Sara) waits for the arrival of Jack who has the power to converse with birds and animals

Enticing the mystical Unicorns to her, Lili is unaware that she is leading them into the Dark Lord's trap

Blix (Alice Playten) and the pig-faced Fox (Peter O'Farrell) look on in horror as one of their friends falls foul of the Dark Lord





are some further notes on programmes previously mentioned in this column: TWILIGHT ZONE

An eye catching main title and suitable ominous score by (appropriately enough) Grateful Dead introduces the new series of *Twilight Zone* stories.

T.Z. led off with *Shatterday*, adapted from one of Harlan Ellison's well-known short stories. Peter Novins is sitting in a bar one evening when he decides to make a 'phone call, but after accidentally dialling his own number – and who hasn't done that on occasion? – it's answered by a man claiming to be, yep Peter Novins. It's a typically atypical Ellison opening which leads to a battle for a man's soul.

Bruce Willis handles the dual role well. And the spiritual struggle is underscored by fine music, especially an eerie woodwind (electronically synthesized or pan pipes, I'm not sure) which is most effective.

The second half of *T.Z.*'s opening bill starred Melinda Dillon in *A Little Piece of Quiet*, a suburban nightmare plugged right into a commonly shared fantasy and the foremost of contemporary phobias.

The second show of the new series presented three short variations on altered perceptions. *Chameleon* was a reworking of the *Alien* premise of an ETI who can mutate at will. *Dreams for Sale*, with Meg Foster, started off as a romantic dreamscape but ended with a chilling science-fiction denouement. And, in *Wordplay*, Robert

Klein starred as an overworked sales executive trying to learn the jargon of a new line in high-tech medical equipment. . . when he discovered that everyday speech is breaking down all around him. It's a superb exercise in linguistic paranoia and a diverting meditation on philosophy's famous 'private language problem'.

Four of the first five segments were directed by Wes Craven. His recent *Nightmare on Elm Street* was easy to overrate because of the dearth of worthwhile horror fare, although it did contain some stunning dream sequences. The *Twilight Zone* has provided him with strong situations and good actors and he certainly rose to the occasion.

Amazing Stories

ANOTHER SUPERB title montage kicks off Steven Spielberg's anthology of *Amazing Stories*. Spielberg himself wrote and directed the first episode *Ghost Train*. At a rumoured budget of two million dollars, this has to be one of the most expensive half-hours over broadcast on television. The premise was familiar: a happy, all-American family are living in a new house built on the exact site of a tragic railroad accident of years before. . . Grandad comes to stay with them. . . seems the eccentric old codger has some unfinished business to attend to. . . yes, it's *Poltergeist* has *An Appointment in Samarra*.

Roberts Blossom (who turned in a quirky cameo in HBO's excellent *Flashpoint*) is fine as the grandfather who cannot avoid his

appointment with fate. Lucas Haas (the youngster in *Witness*) scores again as the grandson. But even with a John Williams' score to soup up the soundtrack and Spielberg's familiar bag of lighting tricks, nothing can disguise the slightness of the piece. All that's left for the viewer is to sit and wait for the ghostly Highball Express to run off its phantom rails to come rumbling through the house.

NBC is keeping *Amazing Stories* under wraps on an ongoing basis, so '... for viewers' maximum amazement, plot details will not be disclosed beforehand'; an odd policy, considering how predictable they are. The second show *The Main Attraction*, again adapted from a Spielberg outline, tells of an obnoxious highschool hotshot who gets magnetized by a falling meteor. The special effects were well done but the ending was obvious from the start.

Future episodes will call on the directorial talents of Clint Eastwood, Peter Hyams, Martin Scorsese, Matthew Robbins, Paul Bartel, and (reportedly) David Lean.

Alfred Hitchcock Presents

THE FIRST of the revived Hitchcock series used a generic opening of the famed director making some cutting remarks while watching himself on a TV set. This served to introduce a disturbing story of a woman's traumatic reaction to rape. It was padded out with a long sequence of a dancersize class but eventually climaxed in the kind of nightmarish 'twist' ending for which the original shows were justly famous.

Brad Davis, Robert Carradine, Sandy Dennis, and Daryl Hannah are slated as future stars of the series.

In early ratings returns viewers gave the nod to Spielberg, Hitchcock, and then *T.Z.*; personally, I would have ranked them in the opposite order. But it will take a few weeks to find out who can maintain the excellent quality of the premiere shows, and whether the time is ripe for a return to the anthology format.

Amos

KIRK DOUGLAS, aged 69, has starred in more than seventy features; some of the most interesting of which were made by his own company, Bryna – for example, *Lonely are the Barve*, and *Paths of Glory*. Now he has teamed up with son, Peter Douglas, to produce the two hour TV movie *Amos*.

As the cinema caters to its largely teenage audience with more and more bubble gum projects, telefilms are an expanding forum for such socially relevant subjects as dyslexia, child abuse, Alzheimer's disease, and assorted mid-life crises. *Amos*, adapted by Richard Kramer from the Stanley West novel, tackles the touchy topic of the institutional abuse of the elderly with an effective mixture of 'message' and often surprisingly upbeat entertainment.

Amos, an ex-baseball coach (and still a rebel in his early eighties), is confined to a coldly efficient nursing home, run with an iron fist by Elizabeth Montgomery. His roommate and neighbours are skillfully etched by veteran performers Ray Walston, Pat Morita (of *The Karate Kid*), and as a touching love interest, Dorothy McGuire. Douglas proves to be a feisty pensioner with enough fight left in him to stand up to the bullying and eventually muderous tactics of the nursing staff. Director Michael Tuchner deftly interweaves the deadly games of wits between Amos and the ruthless head nurse, together with the sub-plot of the growing affection of Douglas and McGuire and some telling observations on the way older people are viewed as discards by modern society.

Amos treats approaching old age with a good deal more honesty, humour, and respect than that overhyped summer success *Cocoon*; and, although one of the first TV movies to be aired in the new season, it's bound to be a strong contender in next year's awards ceremonies.



Gump (David Bennett) comforts Screwball (Billy Barty) inside the cage in the kitchen of the Dark Lord's subterranean castle



Jack O' The Green (Tom Cruise) who lives the free life of a hermit in the forest and understands the language of all wild creatures

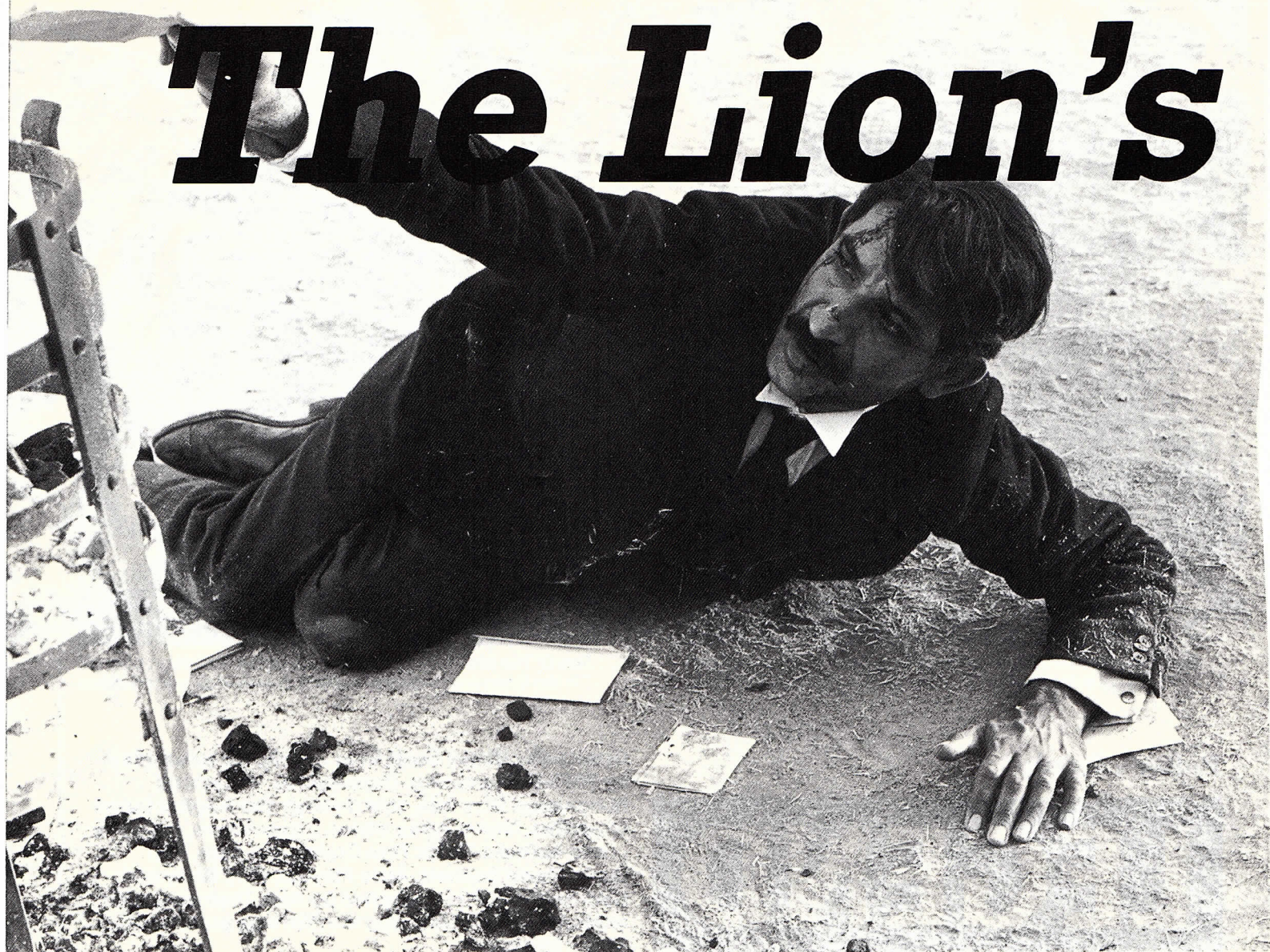
Ridley's Scott's

LEGEND

Directed by Ridley Scott from an original screenplay by William Hjortsberg. Described as 'a mythical, humorous fairy-tale, told through the magical forms of goblins, fairies, elves, pixies, Leprechauns, unicorns ... and humans.' With Tom Cruise, Mia Sara, Tim Curry, David Bennett, Alice Playten, Billy Barty and Cork Hubbert. Photographed by Alex Thomson, with music by Jerry Goldsmith, the film was produced by Arnon Milchan.



The Lion's



'Gentlemanly liberalism soldiers on, half-in, half-out of the system ...' Ben Kingsley as 'Gandhi', directed by Richard Attenborough ...

Perils and Politics of British Cinema

RAYMOND DURGNAT

IF YOU VISIT England next summer, enjoy the stately homes, tea dancing at the Waldorf, the helpful vergers at St. Paul's Cathedral, the real landscapes of Thomas Hardy's *Tess*, and the bobbies on bicycles two by two. But keep an ear open for a quiet seething: the teeth-grinding of a nation with three and half million unemployed and deeper decline on the cards.

British film production shares the national problems, and how. A TV variety show gave me an image for its plight. The young performer comes on made up to look like a doddering, gummy old man. He gets tied up in a thick canvas sack, by a trim young nurse who volunteered from the audience, and by the exuberant black comedienne who is the show's presenter. While the sack sways and bulges a little here and there he explains that he is performing sensational feats of fire-eating, juggling, and tap-dancing, as well as impersonations of Adolf Hitler and Dolly Parton. The audience howled with mirth, out of recognition of an English predicament: a sort of loony energy that can show next to nothing.

A Cottage Industry

AN UPPER CRUST of quality product has been doing fine. Predominantly British productions are the Rolls Royces of P.B.S., or scooped or near-missed Oscars enough. At the other end of the scale, our TV abounds in fine sitcoms and dramas, but mostly too grassrootsy to export. The-much-discussed crisis is about-securing-he

steady stream of middle-range product that projects the British experience in depth abroad and marks a healthy industry at home. But Mamoun Hassan at the National Film Finance Corporation commented: 'Getting your nose into the stream of American product is like trying to get off a sliproad into the motorway.' And Glenda Jackson: 'There is no British film industry. It's always a one-off situation'. A question often asked is, is the British film industry dead, dying or only worrying too much? Or is it alive and well and hiding in our television sets - a parochial wonder, but entirely incomprehensible to anyone but us?

The current crisis caps 80 years of boom-and-bust. The causes have to be deep seated and structural. In particular, the home market is just one bite too small. No way could British companies compete with Hollywood imports (or finance) without government protection and concessions. Even so, the situation favours near duopolys (currently, the Rank Organisation and Thorn-EMI). But it has long been proverbial that the fate of independent films has turned on the tastes of just two men, the booking managers of the duopoly's exhibition chains.

There are social-spiritual problems too. British culture is heavily class-divided. Not on the old, obvious *Upstairs and Downstairs* dichotomy, and not in a particularly snobbish or social-climbing way. But all the more intricately. It adds some quite spookily sensitive avoidance behaviour to